



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**MOROCCO**

*Date: January 27, 2006*

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## HIGHLIGHTS FROM MOROCCO

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### ICT Prompts Innovation in Rural Moroccan Middle Schools



Al Fath junior secondary school, Bouarfa  
(Photo USAID).

The installation of multimedia laboratories by USAID/Morocco in eight rural middle schools in 2005 is encouraging improvement in teaching methods, school opening hours, and even infrastructure investment. Teachers in one school in an isolated region in eastern Morocco are volunteering their time to keep the lab open after school hours and during the weekend to help students with homework and independent research. In another school, the growing Parent-Teacher Association purchased additional computers for the school. An English language teacher in a school in the wind-swept phosphate plains of central Morocco has been using school *blogs* for the first time to encourage students' writing. The ICT component is part of USAID/Morocco's education program to improve quality and relevance in middle school and primary education as well as vocational training in Morocco.

### USAID co-chairs Education donor meeting with Ministry of National Education (MNE)

In an effort to make the donor activities more responsive to Morocco's education issues, USAID and the MNE chaired a very well attended session on the serious subject of **school drop-out**. While Morocco has made great strides in increasing first grade enrollment (92% average), much remains to be done to ensure that those students enrolled complete primary school, let alone middle, or high school. Some 400,000 children dropped out of school during the 2004-2005 school year, which is embarrassingly high (some 5 million total are in the system through high school).

The final conclusion of the meeting was the need to create a national observatory, involving relevant parties, including those with field experience, as well as donors. Another outcome was to encourage regional MNE staff to organize "caravans" that would share experiences with the prevention of drop-out or their reintegration in the program. As a final comment, the MNE co-chair reminded the group that education until age 15 is compulsory by law, but that parents get away with not keeping their children in school. Donors included: The French, World Bank, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNFPA, JICA, EU, and USAID.



### NDI Assistance Plants the Seed for a Draft Law on Freedom of Information

In partnership with the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP) parliamentary caucus, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) organized a forum on "the Right of Access to Information" on December 8, 2005. This event stemmed from increased interest on this topic, due to the Equity and Reconciliation Authority (IER) hearings on past human right abuses. In order to enhance transparency and accountability, participants discussed the importance of enacting a law that would enable both journalists and citizens to have full access to government records. Earlier, NDI also sponsored a workshop on the role of the media in preventing human rights abuses. Based on these activities, the USFP caucus is now working on a **draft Freedom of Information law** to be presented to the Parliament soon.



### Moroccan People Prefer Democracy!

According to the **Pew Global Attitudes Project**<sup>1</sup>, 54% of Moroccans say a good democracy is a more important than a strong economy. Only 41% prefer prosperity. Morocco is the only exception among the nine surveyed countries (India, Indonesia, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, Poland, Russia, and Turkey), where a majority of respondents valued a strong economy in their answers.

The report also underlined that Muslim countries place more confidence in democracy, especially in Morocco, where 73% of respondents believe that a democratic government is more likely to solve the country's problems than a strong leader (9%).

The Moroccan exception may be explained by the particular understanding of democracy that Moroccan people have. While polls and street demonstrations by unemployed graduates show that employment is the main concern of Moroccan citizens, the majority strongly believes that the government is **directly** responsible for providing them a job. Similarly, the government is directly responsible for providing them a shelter, education and health services. Based on this conception, the link between job creation and economic growth is not perceived, and it is therefore natural that a democratic government is thought to be more likely to address the needs of the majority of people.

Q: If you had to choose between a good democracy or a strong economy, which would you say is more important?

A:	Good Dem %	Strong Econ %	Don't Know %
<b>Morocco</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>4</b>
Lebanon	47	51	2
Turkey	45	51	4
India	45	49	7
Pakistan	38	42	21
Jordan	35	65	0
Indonesia	30	69	1
Poland	23	69	8
Russia	14	81	5

<sup>1</sup> Prosperity Tops Political Reform - Russia's Weakened Democratic Embrace, The Pew Global Attitudes Project, January 5, 2006.

### Morocco's Economy Resisted Shocks in 2005

Economic indicators released by the government for 2005 show that the Moroccan economy managed to absorb serious shocks, but at the same time, the country also managed to maintain stability and decent growth, while investing in its future development. According to the government, Morocco's real GDP grew by 1.8% in 2005 (vs. an anticipated 3%). The cost of living index increased by only 1% (down from 1.5% in 2004). These two indicators were achieved despite largely adverse internal and external conditions, which demonstrates that the Moroccan economy is increasingly resilient.

Internally, because of both adverse weather conditions and a locust attacks, cereal crops fell by 57% as compared to 2004, or 35% as compared to the 1999-2004 average. As a consequence, the added value of the agricultural sector, which typically accounts for 15% to 17% of the GDP, fell by 12.5%. Externally, as a non-oil producing country, Morocco suffered from the high price of crude oil on the international market. Despite this trend, the government maintained domestic price of fuels at nearly constant levels by resorting massively to the Compensation Fund, limiting the impact of the energy bill on consumption and investment, to the detriment of public finances. The textile sector, a major source of employment and foreign currency, suffered considerably from the end of the Multi Fiber Agreement, with exports of clothes down by 8.1%, and hosiery down by 14% (as of October 2005).

Despite these adverse conditions, the government managed to increase public investment by 11.5%, while maintaining the public deficit at 3.5% of GDP. These numbers exclude, however, the exceptional expenses linked to an early retirement programmed for civil servants aimed at decreasing the government payroll.



### Events in February 2006:

- Economic Growth roundtable with partners
- Visit to *Pays d'Acceuil Touristique* in Ifrane
- Briefing the Wali of Meknes on USAID activities in the Region
- Literacy Event with State Secretary Anis Birou
- Business Environment Program Event